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A

SERMON,

ON THE PRESENT

REVIVAL OF RELIGION, &c.

IN THIS COUNTRY.

Preached at the opening of the Kentucky Synod—1803.

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ISAIAH xxi. 11, 12.

The burden of Dumah. He called to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The Watchman ſaid, the morning cometh, and alſo the night.

THE prophecy expreſſed in theſe words, is very ſhort. It does not appear to be connected with any thing preceding or following it, which can reflect any light upon the ſubject; we have no hiſtory of its accompliſhment, by which it can be explained: it is therefore dark and hard to be particularly and exactly underſtood.

However, we have here in a viſion, one who appears to be anxiouſly concerned for the good of his country, inquiring of

the prophet into the ſtate of it; *Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?* He expreſſes his earneſtneſs and deſire of information by repeating the queſtion. Here is, no doubt, a reference to the neceſſary cuſtom of appointing watchmen in cities, to guard men from harm, or to give the alarm, when danger approaches.

The prophet, under the character of a watchman, anſwers, the morning cometh, and alſo the night; i. e. you ſhall have a little reſpite from your national diſtreſſes and calamities, but this will ſoon be ſucceeded by a dark night of affliction. A dawn of national proſperity is often ſucceeded by great national judgments and ſore afflictions; and ſo a time of revival in religion is frequently followed by great error and deluſion. When the ſun of trials and perſecution ariſes, the ſtony-ground hearers wither away: when the thorns of worldly cares ſpring up, the ſeed is choaked, and deſolation overſpreads the field. Then a ſad night of deadneſs and deſertion ſucceeds.

Though we want the hiſtorical and exact explanation of this paſſage, yet from the ſimilarity of the ſubjects, and the ſuitableneſs of the words, they may be ſafely and properly accommodated to the ſtate of the chriſtian church. Being thus accommodated, we underſtand by *He*, ſome man of *Seir*, a ſerious inquirer after the ſtate of the church—By the *watchman*, formerly the prophets, and now the miniſters of the goſpel, who are placed as watchmen on Zion's walls—By the *morning*, a time of revival of religion and proſperity of the church—By the *night*, a time of declenſion, backſliding and deſertion.

I. I ſhall ſay ſomething of the morning and its approach.

II. Something of the night and what brings it on.

III. More particularly inquire into the ſtate of religion among ourſelves.

I. I ſhall ſay ſomething of the morning and its approach.

The morning, a time of revival and flouriſhing ſtate of religion, is frequently, and I believe, where there is a profeſſing people, generally introduced by much of a ſpirit of prayer poured out on the people of God; ſo that, Jacob-like, they are wreſtling with him, that his children may be quickened and comforted, ſinners converted, and Zion made to flouriſh and rejoice in the Lord. A little before the reſtoration of the Jews, which it ſeems was a time of religious revival, Daniel had much of this ſpirit of prayer. With what ſolemnity and

faith does he addreſs his Maker; "O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments!" With what humble penitence does he confeſs and bewail his ſins and the ſins of his people! How heartily and ſincerely does he acknowledge the juſtice of God in their puniſhment! And how fervently does he plead for mercy! Thus the Supreme Being ſhews his people that he is a God hearing prayer, and has not ſaid to the houſe of Jacob, ſeek ye me in vain. Thus he makes them ſenſible of their dependence, and thankful for his mercies.

In the beginning of a revival, there is commonly an increaſing ſolemnity and animation in preaching the goſpel, and diſpenſing its ordinances. The ſpirit of the Lord is poured out upon miniſters, they are anointed to preach the goſpel, are ſtirred up to labour with more than uſual diligence and faithfulneſs.

In a time of revival, lifeleſs formaliſts are awakened and rouſed up; back-ſliders are made to return. They go, weeping as they go; they inquire the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, ſaying, "come let us join ourſelves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten."

At ſuch a time, the Bible, that antiquated book, before conſidered too dull to be read by any perſon of taſte, comes into credit and is highly eſteemed: there is an ardent deſire to read, hear and underſtand its ſacred contents. It is highly valued, as containing the rule of the chriſtian's duty, the way of life, and the gracious charter of all the believer's privileges. It is the delight of awakened ſouls, and their meditation night and day. It is the unerring ſtandard by which they try every doctrine, and meaſure every practice. It guards the judicious and ſenſible chriſtian from ſpecious errors, cold formality and enthuſiaſtic flights of paſſion; and its many great and precious promiſes are the ſtrength and joy of their ſouls.

Sabbath opportunities are highly prized, and outward ordinances greatly eſteemed, as means of grace of divine appointment, and attended with great diligence; at the ſame time the mind is deeply impreſſed with a perſuaſion that the ſucceſs of all means depends upon the divine bleſſing. Men are not now diſpoſed to argue away the authority of the Sabbath, and

find a thouſand objections againſt a ſtrictly religious obſervation of it. No! they ſee the wiſdom and goodneſs of God in the inſtitution, and give thanks to his name for it as an ineſtimable privilege. They ſee that religion would ſoon dwindle away and die without it. That it is uſeful as a means of propagating religion in our benighted, ſinful world, converting guilty ſinners to God, and edifying his people. The duties and exerciſes of the Sabbath are the comfort and joy of their ſouls.

When the morning is come, there is commonly found to be a conſiderable, if not a large number of members added to the communion of the church, by conviction and converſion.—This is a day of Chriſt's power, when his people are made willing in the beauties of holineſs from the womb of the morning; a day in which his word is like a fire, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces, and in which the eyes of men are opened, and they turned from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

In a time of revival, there is among the ſubjects of the work, a growing reformation of manners. Groſs immoralities are carefully and conſcientiouſly avoided, and chriſtians diligently return to their duty. They have that faith which works by love, and that love which engages them to keep Chriſt's commandments. They poſſeſs a forbearing and forgiving temper of heart. Humility, modeſty, meekneſs and benevolence rule their minds and their conduct towards their fellow creatures. Temperance, chaſtity and ſobriety appear in their lives. They have a compaſſionate regard to their fellow creatures in diſtreſs, and honeſtly endeavour to relieve them—eſpecially thoſe who are diſtreſſed in their conſciences under a ſenſe of unpardoned guilt. Where men are truly and thoroughly reformed, care will be taken to make reſtitution for injuries done to others, and alſo to do juſtice to the perſons, reputations and eſtates of men.

In a time of revival, chriſtians' hearts are warmed with ſincere love to all who bear the image of Jeſus Chriſt, though they go by different names from themſelves, and have different ſentiments on ſeveral religious ſubjects. Yet the judicious chriſtian will not part with truth, or make a ſacrifice of his creed to other people, however he may eſteem them, knowing that the beſt of men are fallible and have their miſtakes, and that there is no

unerring guide but the oracles of divine inſpiration. It is true, men are often ſtrongly diſpoſed to juſtify or condemn perſons or things by the lump. A particular perſon is eſteemed all perfection or imperfection—a particular party is thought to be almoſt blameleſs; or void of any good qualities *at all.* A ſcheme of doctrines is thought to be all truth or all error. A religious ſtir to be all from the Spirit of God, and therefore right; or all from the ſpirit of error and deluſion: all rational and agreeable to ſcripture, or all wild and enthuſiaſtic. But the quickened and judicious chriſtian, knowing that there is no abſolute perfection among men, will not juſtify or condemn in the maſs; but will endeavour rightly to diſtinguiſh and ſeparate the wheat from the chaff. He will love thoſe who appear to bear the image of Chriſt, and receive them in his heart and affections, though he believes them to labour under a number of miſtakes.

II. I ſhall ſay ſomething of the *Night* and what brings it on.

By the night, as I ſaid, we are to underſtand a time of declenſion, backſliding and deſertion.—When the love of many waxes cold, and the life of religion decays, it is common for many to backſlide, "to return with the dog to his vomit, and the ſow that was waſhed to her wallowing in the mire." Then God deſerts the ſouls of profeſſors—deſerts his miniſters and his ordinances. Now the ſun is ſet, and darkneſs, thick darkneſs overſpreads the church. God's people forſake him, and he forſakes them, and covers his Zion with a cloud in his anger. Some profeſſors are given up to wild enthuſiaſtic errors and deluſions, and ſome bound faſt in the chains of a bigotted orthodoxy.

There are many things which tend to put a ſtop to a religious revival: ſome of theſe human weakneſſes, and corruptions riſe out of the revival itſelf.

Spiritual pride is one of theſe: this is raiſed out of great illuminations and bright manifeſtations. It is evidenced by great ſelf-confidence, a forward, aſſuming, dogmatical air; a great diſpoſition to be judging the ſtate of others, pronouncing on them with a deciſive tone, and caſting on them cenſorious reflections. Such have a fondneſs for their own attainments and experiences, and to make theſe the common topics of their converſation, and that when there is no proper call

for it. They ſhew a fondneſs to be admired for theſe things, and for their great gifts, if they are poſſeſſed of any. Such commonly ſpeak with an air of infallibility, and are impatient of contradiction. They are blind to their own faults, eagle-eyed to diſcern the faults of others, and liberal in their cenſures. When this temper is obſerved in profeſſors, prejudices are too apt to riſe in the minds of men againſt religion itſelf: and by it that God is provoked, who has ſaid he will ſtain the pride of all glory: the light of his countenance is withdrawn, and thick darkneſs ſucceeds.

Through the weakneſs of human nature, a degree of enthuſiaſm attends almoſt every revival of religion. Where it riſes to any great height, it naturally tends to mar the work, and put a ſtop to its progreſs.

By enthuſiaſm, I do not mean a great degree of warmth and animation in religion, nor a perſuaſion that this warmth and animation ariſes from the operations of the Holy Spirit, applying divine truth and impreſſing the heart with a ſenſe of its excellency and importance, exciting an ardent love to precious immortal ſouls, and deſire for the coming of the kingdom of God's grace. Neither by enthuſiaſm do I mean, over ſanguine expectations of a great, ſpeedy and extenſive revival of religion, beyond what cool reaſon will juſtify. Something of this, call it enthuſiaſm if you pleaſe, ſeems to be neceſſary for the accompliſhment of every great deſign. It was political enthuſiaſm, akin to this, which carried the Americans through their arduous conflict with Britain. Enthuſiaſm like this, no doubt, animated Luther and other reformers to dare the great attempt of reſcuing Chriſtendom from eccleſiaſtical tyranny. This I ſay is not what I mean. The enthuſiaſm I expoſe ariſes from a miſtake about the operations of the Divine Spirit; from not diſtinguiſhing between its common and extraordinary operations—between the gifts and graces of the Spirit. Being miſtaken here, men think ſome ſtrong impulſes or impreſſions on their minds, cauſed perhaps by the heat and ſtrength of their imaginations, or a tumultuous motion of various paſſions, are a kind of revelation from heaven. They are the more ready to think ſo, if theſe impreſſions be attended, as they may be in ſome inſtances, with ſweet ſerenity of mind; or as in ſome others, with great religious joy. Under the influence of theſe enthuſiaſtic miſtakes, men may poſi-

tively conclude this or that doctrine to be true or falſe, not becauſe they find or do not find it in the holy ſcriptures; but becauſe they felt ſo and ſo, when praying, thinking or ſpeaking about it. Or they conclude that this or that is their duty, not from any precept they find in the Bible, but becauſe they feel ſo and ſo, becauſe they have ſuch and ſuch extraordinary exerciſes of mind about it. This is in effect making the exerciſes of their mind, or their religious feelings, a new or an additional revelation from heaven. Under the influence of ſuch miſtakes as theſe, I ſuppoſe, ſome have believed themſelves called to preach the Goſpel, whom nature has forbidden to preach, and whom the God of nature never called to the work. Under the ſame miſtake, a man may believe that every idea he expreſſes for half an hour together, and the very words by which he expreſſes them, are immediately given him from heaven; when there is very little uſeful matter in his diſcourſe, and as little common ſenſe. All however is aſcribed to the Spirit of God, and that Divine Spirit made anſwerable for man's weakneſs: or he may think he has received meſſages from the Lord to particular perſons, and may carry and deliver them as by divine authority.

But to mention all the wild things which this miſtake has produced, would be an endleſs taſk. Many for a while may be carried away with theſe notions; but after ſome time their heat commonly abates, they become cool, dwindle away, ſink into inſignificancy and ſoon ceaſe to exiſt; or as has been the caſe in ſome inſtances, they recover by degrees from their delirium, correct their own errors, and form themſelves into an orderly ſociety.

When profeſſors imbibe theſe notions, it is commonly in vain to reaſon with them—they are beyond the reach of all argument. They cannot ſuſpect themſelves to be under a miſtake, being, as they think, favoured with the guidance of infinite wiſdom.

When this enthuſiaſm predominates, ſome may be carried away by it irrecoverably. Some in order to avoid this extreme, run into an oppoſite one, perhaps equally offenſive to God, and hurtful to the ſouls of men—I mean that of a dull, lifeleſs formality: while others, ever prone to judge of religion by its profeſſors, and not from the ſacred Oracles, imbibe ſtrong prejudices, ſink into ſcepticiſm, and renounce all

religion. Honeſt chriſtians, who are determined to perſevere through every diſcouragement, are greatly diſtreſſed, and give themſelves up to a life of ſecret mourning. Thus a pleaſant morning is ſucceeded by a diſmal night of clouds and of darkneſs that may be felt.

Another thing which I ſuppoſe frequently brings on a gloomy night, is the people idolizing certain inſtruments or means of grace. A miniſter has ſomething very engaging in his manner, or his labours have been crowned with great ſucceſs: high expectations have been raiſed, and ardent deſires excited to hear this man preach above all others. The creature is looked to and depended upon more than the creator. Or one religious ordinance is much preferred to another, and great dependence put upon it, while others, equally the appointments of heaven, are comparatively undervalued and neglected. Sacramental ſolemnities, baptiſing days, quarterly or claſs meetings are much attended and great dependence put upon them; while ordinary preaching, ſecret and family worſhip, or family inſtruction, are too much undervalued and neglected. Means which are partly the inventions of men, are preferred to thoſe which are evidently of divine appointment, and more dependence put upon them than on the fountain of grace.—This idolatry is provoking to the Almighty, and cauſes him to withhold the light of his countenance; and thus is brought on a night of deſertion.

The ſame fatal effect may be produced by miniſters becoming vain of their popularity or ſucceſs, and deſiring to be called of men *Rabbi*. A concern for their own glory ſwallows up their concern for the glory of God and the ſalvation of men. This vanity is too often excited, eſpecially in young preachers, by the injudicious applauſes of ſome honeſt weak people. By this deteſtable idolatry, however, the Lord is provoked to deſert his miniſters and their labours; he covers their ſouls with darkneſs, and ſtains the pride of their glory.

Another thing which tends to produce the evil we are ſpeaking of, is placing religion in things in which it does not conſiſt, or in which it conſiſts but very little. This naturally turns the minds of men off from the eſſential and important doctrines and duties of religion, from the life, the power and practice of godlineſs, to comparatively trifling circumſtances. The ſoul of religion then departs, or degenerates into trifling

ceremony, empty formality, party prejudice, or uncharitable bigotry. Now as much or more zeal is discovered about a ceremony, a mode of worship, a form of government, or even a coat, a habit or a button, as about the salvation of a soul.

The progress of religion and prosperity of the church, may be stopped by the improper exercise of church discipline — Too lax a government withholds a proper testimony against vice and immorality; which tends to countenance loose living, and to harden men's hearts in sin. But, perhaps, a more common and fatal error in a time of revival, is too much severity in animadverting upon the faults of brethren, and sometimes those faults comparatively small. A forward zeal hurries on the members or officers of the church beyond the limits of good order. They aim at the credit of religion, but mistake the means of accomplishing their purpose. Rash sentiments are passed, which can by no means be justified, and scarcely excused. Suspicions are raised, ill-will excited, and parties are formed, wrangling takes place, the sun of prosperity sets, and a dark night succeeds.

Another thing destructive to a religious revival is party debates, with christians of other denominations. These debates may be about the essential and important doctrines or duties of religion. In this case, it is the duty of all, in their proper places, and according to their abilities, to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. But much injury is done to vital religion, by the manner of contending for it. It is not in christian humility, meekness and benevolence: railing is used instead of reasoning, hard words instead of sound arguments. But these pernicious debates are most commonly about the modes of worship and government, or the terms of admission to the distinguishing ordinances of the gospel.

I suppose it possible for ministers and other leading members of a church to insist so long and so earnestly upon the baptism of children, by effusion, as to induce the people to believe it impossible for a child to be saved, unless thus baptized: or, for them to dwell so much on the baptism of adults, by immersion, as thereby to persuade many to think it essential to salvation, and that without it none are to be esteemed and treated as christians. When these and such like things are argued into matters of such vast importance, and the minds of men

heated with the ſubject, they are prepared to contend earneſtly for theſe things, as for the moſt important truths. Mutual oppoſition between litigants, produces mutual coldneſs of affection; they grow ſhy, and at length looking on each other as enemies to the truth and the cauſe of God, they prepare for war, and engage with all their forces. Thus, immoderate zeal for matters of little comparative importance, degenerates into ill nature, the ſpirit of love is deſtroyed, the church is deſerted and left in darkneſs. Much bigotry, prejudice and party zeal may remain,; but little of the power and practice of godlineſs.

Miniſters, alas! are men of like paſſions with others, and often indulge their paſſions to the diſhonour of God and great grief of his people, and eſpecially of the tender lambs of his flock. When the miniſters of love and peace are found contending one with one another in a bitter and implacable manner; when each has influence enough to aſſociate with himſelf a number of partizans, and then diffuſe their ill humour among the people, the effects are fatal to the intereſt of religion. Theſe miniſters may have been the inſtruments of the morning's coming, they may have been as the morning ſtar to uſher in the day: they are alſo the inſtruments of bringing on a diſmal night of darkneſs: they are the means of hardening the hearts of impenitent ſinners, of bringing ſecking ſouls back to a ſtate of careleſſneſs, grieving the hearts of God's people, and weakening the hands of their brethren in the miniſtry: they not only hinder their own uſefulneſs, but prevent the ſucceſs of others. They may do more injury to the cauſe of Chriſt in a few hours, than they do good in ſeven years, or even a whole life time. O my brethren, let us ſtand and tremble at our ſituation, at our own great imperfections! Let us be humbled in the duſt, and live a life of conſtant dependence on the wiſdom and grace of God! The academy of Chriſt is kept among the willows in the valley of humility, and the peaceable, loving temper that becomes a miniſter of his goſpel, is to be learned only there.

Another powerful cauſe of declenſion, is contentions among profeſſing people of the ſame religious connection. Theſe ariſe from the unguarded uſe of the tongue, from the claſhing of temporal intereſts, or from a diverſity of ſentiments about the doctrines or duties of religion. They are agitated with

intemperate heat, produce an alienation of affection, and many evil ſurmiſes and ſevere reflections: mutual love is no more, and mutual good offices ceaſe. When theſe things prevail in a ſociety, the Spirit of God is grieved and departs.

Another thing, and one of the moſt effectual too, which ſtops a revival and hinders the ſucceſs of the goſpel, is contentions between miniſters and their people. Theſe are commonly cauſed by neglect of duty in miniſters, or people, or both. Miniſters ſometimes preach with little or no previous ſtudy—they do not read, in order to lay up a ſtore of uſeful knowledge; therefore their diſcourſes contain very little uſeful matter; this is repeated over and over in a confuſed way, without any proper connection or arrangement. They do not pay a proper attention to the flocks over which the Holy Ghoſt hath made them overſeers: children and youth, the lambs of the flock, are greatly, if not totally neglected. This neglect ariſes ſometimes from indolence, ſometimes from exceſſive attachment to their worldly intereſt; or they ſpend too much time in reading authors of taſte, or in keeping faſhionable company, converſing on war, politics, or other current topics of the day. Thus their time is waſted in trifles, which ought to be ſpent in uſeful ſtudies, in prayer for their people, in inſtructing the ignorant, in warning the unruly, or in comforting thoſe who mourn in Zion. When the people obſerve this negligence, it never fails to make them uneaſy. Some of the moſt ſagacious, perhaps not the moſt charitable, expreſs their uneaſineſs, and ſometimes in a way unmercifully ſevere. They do not go to them in a brotherly way, and in a ſpirit of love and meekneſs point out to them their faults; but expreſs their uneaſineſs to one neighbour and another, until they ſpread diſcontent through the whole ſociety. The miniſter perhaps is too proud to receive a reproof from one of his own people, and if an offended perſon go to him and tell him his fault, he eſteems it an affront. However, the manner in which he is treated, is frequently not very reſpectful or regular. He reſents the uſage, and mutual criminations take place. The matter proceeds from bad to worſe, until it gets into ſuch a wretched ſituation that it cannot be amicably adjuſted, but muſt be decided by preſbyterial authority. When this is reſolved on, each party will endeavour to ſtrengthen himſelf all

he can, and by ſo doing, ſpreads the miſchief wider and wider. Each one ſees the cauſe of Chriſt now bleeding, and charges the guilt of it on his antagoniſt.

But a miniſter will ſay, and ſome I believe may ſay it with truth, that it is his ardent deſire more diligently and conſtantly to devote himſelf to the work of the goſpel miniſtry; but his worldly circumſtances are ſo ſtraitened and the demands of his family ſo preſſing, that he cannot do it without denying the faith and being worſe than an infidel. Where this objection is honeſtly made and ſufficiently ſupported by facts, I acknowledge a miniſter is in a ſad dilemma. He is obliged by the law of nature, a divine law which he is bound to obey, to attend to the demands of his family: at the ſame time he ſuſtains another relation, the duties of which are very important and preſſing. If he neglects the duties of the goſpel miniſtry, he ſees the intereſts of religion and precious ſouls ſuffering: if he neglects to provide for his family, he forfeits the character of a chriſtian: if he does not diſcharge his debts which he has neceſſarily contracted, he forfeits the character of an honeſt man: if he complains of his worldly circumſtances, he opens the mouths of his enemies and the enemies of religion, and increaſes their number: profeſſors of other denominations uncharitably make it matter of reflection upon the whole ſociety to which he belongs. In this ſituation, his mind is diſtreſſed and diſtracted night and day, and his life is extremely uncomfortable, if not uſeleſs. If his people are of ability to ſupport him, whatever he may *ſay*, he *thinks* hard of them; he thinks they are unkind and unjuſt: theſe thoughts have a natural tendency to deſtroy that love which a miniſter ought to have for the people of his charge. He grows weary of his ſituation, and deſires to change it for a better, if poſſible.

Notwithſtanding all theſe things, it is the duty of a goſpel miniſter to be inſtant in ſeaſon and ought of ſeaſon; to give himſelf to reading, meditation and prayer, to the miniſtry of the word, and the paſtoral inſpection of the flock committed to his care. And this, it muſt be acknowledged, is ſufficient to occupy the time and abilities of any one man. If he does not do this, he unavoidably becomes lean or barren, and his preaching has very little inſtruction or edification in it.

This leads me to call up the obſervation, that diſputes between miniſters and people ſometimes ariſe from the people's

neglect of their duty to their miniſter. They refuſe to ſubmit to, or to countenance and ſupport that wholeſome diſcipline which is neceſſary for the well-being of the church, and which Chriſt has appointed for its edification. This weakens the hands of a miniſter, diſcourages his heart, and prevents the ſucceſs of his labour. Or they withhold from him that ſupport which he needs, and which they are able to afford him without being ſubjected to any intolerable burden. They are at any rate more able to ſupport their miniſter, than a woman is to ſupport a miniſter for them, and five or ſix children of her own beſides. Where they are not obliged by any particular compact to afford him his ſupport, it is nevertheleſs ungenerous to withhold it. He has ſown, and is ſowing to them ſpiritual things; and is it a great matter that he ſhould reap their carnal things? He is their ſervant, and the ſervant is worthy of his hire: but though they enjoy the benefit of his labours, they unjuſtly withhold his wages—they diſregard the authority of God, who has ordained that they who preach the goſpel ſhould live of the goſpel. They ſay he ought to live by his own labour and the labour of his poor wife; but God ſays otherwiſe. Where there is a particular contract, and the people have explicitly engaged to ſupport a miniſter while he labours among them, and they do not diſcharge their obligations to him, they are guilty of deceiving him by falſe promiſes, and that often to his great injury. They are, in a word, covenant-breakers, and live under the guilt of wilful, known falſehood: and yet they muſt be called chriſtians, and treated as ſuch. Should they treat any other man as they do their miniſter, they would juſtly fall under the cenſure of the church, and without repentance, would be excommunicated.

When there is what is eſteemed a revival, the people ſometimes ſeem ſo taken up with other things, that they almoſt entirely forget their duty to their miniſter. They leave him and his family without the neceſſary means of ſupport. He, partly of modeſty, and partly out of fear of injuring the cauſe of Chriſt, which lies near his heart, bears long and ſays little or nothing: his incomes are however ſtopped, and the means of ſupport fail. He lives on his credit, until it is almoſt ſunk. At length he is obliged to ſpeak and utter his complaints. He no ſooner begins to complain to his people, than they ſuſpect

him of worldly-mindedneſs—their affections begin to cool towards him, and they ſtill withhold from him what is juſtly his due, and ſometimes ſpread ſurmiſes or caſt reflections upon him to the injury of his character: the conſequence frequently is, the relation is diſſolved and a final ſeparation takes place. The morning came, the night is alſo come, and all is covered with darkneſs.

Where a miniſter ſees it his duty to ſettle as the paſtor of a people, who are poor and not able to do much for his ſupport, they ought to divide the burden between them. The people ſhould do what they can for his ſupport and comfort, and the miniſter ſhould be contented with as little as may be. He ſhould ſpend what time he can in the duties of his functions, and they allow him a portion for neceſſary family buſineſs. In this way they ſhould keep up chriſtian communion and fellowſhip with each other. This would unite them in love, and contribute much to their mutual comfort and edification.

Where a miniſter is placed among a people who are able to ſupport him, he is out of his duty if he ſpend his time in worldly buſineſs to the neglect of his official duties: and the people are out of their duty, if it is neceſſary that he ſhould. All, both miniſter and people, are living in ſin and cannot reaſonably expect the bleſſing. They are acting contrary to the mind of God, who has ordained, that they who preach the goſpel, ſhould live of the goſpel.

The chriſtians of the preſent day ſeem to have no reſpect to the recompence of reward. The apoſtle ſays, ſpeaking on this ſubject of ſupporting miniſters, *they who ſow ſparingly ſhall alſo reap ſparingly*; and may we not juſtly infer, that they who ſow nothing ſhall reap nothing? They are not "honouring the Lord with their ſubſtance, nor with the firſt fruits of their increaſe—they are not laying up treaſure in heaven, nor making to themſelves friends of the mammon of unrighteouſneſs." We ſee what is the ordination of God: but ſome, though they "break this commandment, and teach men ſo, yet do not ſeem to realiſe that this their diſobedience will prove them to be leaſt in the kingdom of heaven, even if this ſhould be the leaſt of his commandments."

When church members, and eſpecially miniſters, imbibe much of the ſpirit of this world, view the honours, the faſhions,

and the wealth of the world, as matters of great importance, and become anxious to obtain them; when they are conformed to this world, and not transformed by the renewing of their mind: are alive to the world, and not crucified to it, with its affections and lusts; then declension, backsliding and desertion take place; the progress of religion is stopped, and a strong bar laid in the way of its revival.

III. I shall endeavour more particularly to inquire into the state of religion among ourselves.

It appears to me that if we carefully and impartially inquire into the state of religion in this land, and duly consider the stir which has so much engaged the attention of people generally, we shall have reason to conclude, that we enjoy the morning of a gracious revival of the religion of Jesus: but that it is not a morning without threatening clouds, and a prospect of a gloomy night.

1. It appears to me that the present stir in the land is a real revival of the christian religion. My reason for this opinion, is not my seeing a considerable number of people very earnestly engaged in this matter; for men may be very earnestly engaged, not only in true, but in false religion. Nor is it that many are thrown into great bodily agitations; sometimes into fainting or convulsive fits, or are the subjects of violent spasmodic affections,* which give them a strength and activity of body, far beyond the ordinary strength of nature; for such

* As to those bodily exercises I acknowledge I never experienced them; and therefore it becomes me to speak about them with modesty. As far as I can learn from a number of instances compared together, those who are the subjects of these bodily exercises, have sometimes their minds covered with darkness, and their ideas all in confusion; so that nothing can be made of them either one way or another. But commonly their ideas are very lively and impressive, though not always just. If they have right notions of divine things previous to their falling into these exercises, their ideas in the time are just, lively and very impressive: and their exercises have a happy influence on their temper and conduct, if they are careful to make the written word their guide; as they commonly are, because it is the truth in the word that makes the impression. If previous to their falling their ideas are wrong the impression is very lively but false, and the effects dangerous. The danger is, they imagine that these discoveries and impressions are made by the Spirit of God, and are therefore certainly true: and out of this belief it is exceeding difficult to reason them. Each of the above observations might be illustrated by particular instances, which would serve as facts to establish them. This renders it very necessary, in the present day, to guard against enthusiasm: but, though it is extremely necessary, the very attempt might expose a man to the censure of being an enemy to the revival. In religious matters, men are commonly the least afraid of what they are in most danger of.

bodily agitations have been produced, and I ſuppoſe may again be produced, by the operations of impoſture on the credulity and ſuperſtition of mankind: yea, by things which have no relation to religion. I do not draw my concluſion from the ſtrong aſſurance ſome of the ſubjects of this work often expreſs of their own converſion. I build but very little upon men's opinion of themſelves, believing that the ſelf-deceived often have as great aſſurance as the true convert, and are apt to expreſs it with equal, if not greater confidence. I do not draw my concluſion from people's meeting together in large crowds, and ſpending three or four days in religious exerciſes, with but little intermiſſion. Neither is my inference drawn from ſeeing people tranſported with joy, and ſhouting and ſinging the praiſes of God and a Redeemer: for I know by experience and obſervation, that there are falſe joys as well as true. A miſtaken belief, that the Lord is my God, may fill me even with unutterable joy, as well as a rational and ſcriptural perſuaſion of it. My inference is not drawn from ſeeing perſons, after great diſtreſs and horror of mind, ſuddenly breaking out into tranſports of joy and thankfulneſs; becauſe I believe this is frequently the caſe, where there is no true knowledge of God and his Son Jeſus Chriſt, nor faith in the goſpel plan of ſalvation. My concluſion is not drawn from my finding people exceedingly zealous to promote this work, and defend every attending circumſtance. This is often diſcovered in promoting and defending a falſe religion as well as a true. It may ariſe from pride and party zeal. When it is chiefly employed in defending the outward circumſtances of a work, or the peculiarities of a party, it is much to be ſuſpected. Nor, finally, is my concluſion drawn from this work making a conſiderable ſpread, and many people of various ranks falling in with it, nor from its continuance now in the land for ſix years; for error and deluſion may ſpread far and continue long. But my opinion is founded on the following things, taken in connection.

1. This revival has made its appearance in various places, without any extraordinary means to produce it: the preaching, the ſinging, the praying, have been the ſame, to which people had been long accuſtomed, and under which they had hardened to a great degree: and the firſt ſymptoms of the revival, have been a praying ſpirit in the few pious people found

among us. They ſomehow got their minds impreſſed with a ſenſe of their own backſliding; with a ſenſe of the prevalence of vice, infidelity and impiety; an unuſual compaſſionate concern for the ſalvation of precious ſouls, who were periſhing in their ſins, and for the proſperity of Zion. They prayed; they endeavoured to excite their friends and neighbours to pray; they formed themſelves into praying ſocieties, that they might mutually encourage and aſſiſt each other. The revival appears to be granted in anſwer to prayer, and in confirmation of that gracious truth, that God has not ſaid to the houſe of Jacob, ſeek ye me in vain, when he ſays he will be inquired of by the houſe of Iſrael to do it for them.

2. As far as I can ſee, there appears to be in the ſubjects of this work, a deep, heart-humbling ſenſe of the great unreaſonableneſs, abominable nature, pernicious effects and deadly conſequences of ſin; and the abſolute unworthineſs of the ſinful creature of the ſmalleſt crumb of mercy from the hand of a holy God. There appears to be in them a deep mourning on account of their own ſins, the ſins of their fellow profeſſors, and the ſins of the careleſs and profane; and particularly for the baſe ſin of ingratitude to God for his many mercies; and alſo of the juſtice of God in condemning and puniſhing his offending creatures.

3. They appear to have a lively and very affecting view of the infinite condeſcenſion and love of God the Father, in giving his eternal and only begotten Son, for the redemption of mankind; and of the infinite love of the Redeemer, manifeſted in the great and gracious work of redemption; manifeſted in the labours and ſorrows of his life and of his death: an affecting view of the aſtoniſhing goodneſs of the adorable Trinity, in providing and applying a complete atonement for the ſin of fallen man, and a perfect righteouſneſs for his juſtification; and all this in a way that not only ſecures, but advances the honours of God's law and government, and illuſtrates his juſtice, holineſs, truth and tender mercies. Jeſus Chriſt and him crucified, appears to be the ALL IN ALL to the ſubjects of this revival, and the creature nothing and leſs than nothing.

4. They ſeem to me to have a very deep and affecting ſenſe of the worth of precious immortal ſouls, ardent love to them, and an agonizing concern for their conviction, converſion and complete ſalvation. As far as I can judge, they are pleading

for this with ſtrong, fervent deſires, with deep humility, with faith in God's promiſes and in the merits and interceſſion of Jeſus Chriſt. Perhaps the ardency of their love ſometimes hurries them into ſome indiſcretions which excite the prejudices of thoſe for whoſe ſalvation they are pleading. Men are imperfect creatures, and theſe, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, appear to be the generous blunders of benevolence. This love, this compaſſion, this ardent deſire, this agonizing, this fervent pleading for the ſalvation of ſinful men, and for Zion's proſperity, far exceed any thing I have ever ſeen.—This love, theſe fervent ſupplications are not confined to a particular ſpot or a particular party. They extend to and include men of every deſcription; Catholics and Proteſtants, Jews, Mahometans and Pagans. The moſt ſavage nations, who are ſunk almoſt beneath the notice of others, are embraced in the arms of their benevolence. Little children lie near their hearts; they take them in the arms, and put the hands of their benevolence upon them, and plead with the Father of Mercies to bleſs them. O thou fountain of mercy, give me, give to all, this ſpirit of love, of grace and ſupplication!

5. A conſiderable number of individuals appear to me to be greatly reformed in their morals. This is undoubtedly the caſe within the ſphere of my particular acquaintance. Yea, ſome neighbourhoods noted for their vicious and profligate manners, are now as much noted for their piety and good order. Drunkards, profane ſwearers, liars, quarrelſome perſons, &c. are remarkably reformed. The ſongs of the drunkard are exchanged for the ſongs of Zion: fervent prayer ſucceeds in the room of profane oaths and curſes: the lying tongue has learned to ſpeak truth in the fear of God: and the contentious firebrand is converted into a lover of peace. A number of poor backſliders appear to be ſenſible, that "it is an evil thing and a bitter, that they have forſaken the Lord their God; and are returning to him with penitent hearts, going and weeping, inquiring the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, and we hope are joining themſelves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten."

6. A number of families, who had lived apparently without the fear of God, in folly and in vice, without any religious inſtruction or any proper government, are now reduced to order, and are daily joining in the worſhip of God, reading

his word, ſinging his praiſes, and offering up their ſupplications to a throne of grace. Parents who formerly ſeemed to have little or no regard for the ſouls of their children, are now anxiouſly concerned for their ſalvation; are pleading for them, and endeavouring to lead them to Chriſt, and train them up in the ways of piety and virtue. Maſters who formerly treated their ſervants as brutes, are now earneſtly concerned for the ſalvation of their ſouls, and uſing means to promote it.

7. The ſubjects of this work appear to be very ſenſible of the neceſſity of *Sanctification* as well as Juſtification, and that "without holineſs no man can ſee the Lord:" to be greatly deſirous that they themſelves and "all that name the name of Chriſt ſhould depart from iniquity;" ſhould recommend the religion of Jeſus to the conſciences and eſteem of their fellow men; that the light of their holy converſation ſhould "ſo ſhine before men, that they ſeeing their good works, might give glory to God. A heaven of perfect purity and the full enjoyment of God, appears to be the chief and ultimate object of their deſire and purſuit.*

* One objection frequently laid in againſt the work, is wat is called *Lay-exhorting*. I take the liberty here to ſhew my opinion on this ſubject. The cuſtom which has long prevailed among Preſbyterians with reſpect to this matter, I think, has been wrong, and very pernicious to the intereſts of religion in our churches. By cuſtom men's hands have been too much tied up, their mouths too much ſhut, and they thereby prevented doing what they ought to have done, and what they might have done without ſtepping out of their own places. The work has been left almoſt entirely to miniſters, and therefore has not ſpread and prevailed as much as it might have done. When one neighbour addreſſes another, or two or three others, in an affectionate, kind and reſpectful manner, it is much apter to gain attention, and affect the heart, than the moſt ſolid diſcourſes from the pulpit, and from the mouth of one whoſe occupation it is to preach the word. I can ſee no reaſon why a man, or even a woman, when deeply impreſſed with a ſenſe of the ſinful and miſerable ſtate of their fellow creatures, ſhould not plainly and affectionately warn them of their danger, and perſuade them to avoid it. Should they ſee them expoſed to imminent danger from fire or water, and inſenſible of it, no perſon would blame them ſhould they give warning with loud cries and earneſt intreaties; men would not eſteem it as too aſſuming and arrogant, but as a genuine expreſſion of compaſſion. Why the former ſhould be cenſured and reſtrained, while the latter is commended as proper, I do not ſee. To hinder men in either caſe, would be a violent reſtraint on the benevolence of the heart, and nature itſelf would ſtrongly remonſtrate. When this freedom has been uſed with prudence and an air of modeſty and tenderneſs, I do not recollect ever to have known an inſtance of its giving offence to any ſerious mind. But when it is done with an air of domination and authority, as if by a commiſſion from heaven, and with a ſtern, commanding countenance, it is much out of character and very hurtful to the cauſe: It is exactly calculated to provoke reſentment, and fix in the minds of men ſtrong prejudices

Now I have given you my reaſons for concluding the *morning is come*, and that we are bleſſed with a real revival of the benign, the heaven-born religion of Jeſus Chriſt; which demands our grateful acknowledgments to God the Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt.

If I am miſtaken, I think it is not a miſtake of the nature of religion, but of the appearances of the preſent day: a miſtake about the ſufficiency of the phenomena to prove the work to be ſuch as I have repreſented it. I ſuppoſe that numbers, and ſome of them ſenſible, pious, good people, have formed a different opinion. Had I viewed the work at a diſtance, and attended chiefly to outward circumſtances, I ſhould have formed the ſame unfavourable opinion. I endeavoured, as far as I could, to look into the nature of the work, and obſerve its tendencies and effects. I know I have been careful to judge impartially: I have ſometimes felt ſtrong prejudices; I have found fault with many things, I have diſputed almoſt every extraordinary circumſtance; ſome things I do not yet approve, and perhaps never ſhall: but you have the concluſion I have drawn upon the whole, and the premiſes from which that concluſion is drawn. I think I have had as good opportunities to judge of the matter, as moſt of thoſe who think differently from me: but it is proper each one ſhould judge for himſelf.

againſt religion. If any ſhould ſay, "they cannot help it"—I reply, if ſo, they cannot help doing wrong, and acting contrary to the word of God. No impulſes, however ſtrong, can juſtify a man in acting contrary to ſcripture and reaſon; can juſtify a woman in laying aſide her proper, native modeſty and delicacy, and aſſuming a maſculine boldneſs, or a liberty unbecoming her ſex. Women profeſſing godlineſs, at all times and in all places, ſhould be examples of modeſty, and eſpecially in the houſe of God. A woman by deviating a little from female modeſty, may do more injury to the cauſe of Chriſt and to precious ſouls, than ſhe ever will do good by all her moſt pathetic exhortations.

But what I plead for in the beginning of this note, is a very different thing from aſſuming the character of a public Exhorter. This, I think, none ought to do, unleſs called to it by the ſociety, and agreeably to the rules of government of the ſociety to which he belongs. Only admit of it, only allow one to become an Exhorter when he pleaſes, and you open a way for thoſe who are too ignorant to know their own weakneſs, too ſelf-confident to be under government and controul, too vain to behave with decency, and enthuſiaſtic enough to imagine they have authority to ſpeak in the name of the Lord, tho' they can ſcarce ſpeak common ſenſe. This would deſtroy all rule, and reduce the church to a diſorderly Mob. It would be the way to encourage a number of ambitious and enthuſiaſtic pretenders to head every one his party, divide the church into factions, oppoſite contending factions, and thus deſtroy it.

We ought, however, to take great care, leſt haply we be found to fight againſt God.

The morning cometh, and alſo the night.

[To be concluded]

[*From the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine.*]

On the SINFULNESS of HUMAN NATURE.

MESSRS. EDITORS,

SOME time ſince, in converſation with a gentleman of reſpectability, and a profeſſor of religion, he made the following obſervation: "I know our preachers, of late, dwell much on the doctrine of total depravity of affection; and boldly aſſert that all men, by nature, are oppoſed to God's true character, and his gracious way of ſalvation by Jeſus Chriſt.—For my own part, I do not believe the doctrine to be true, at leaſt in general—I never ſaw the time, ſince I can remember, when God's character did not appear lovely, and his way of ſalvation agreeable."

This obſervation turned my thoughts anew upon the ſubject.—The following is the reſult of my meditation on the oppoſition of the natural heart to God's character, and way of ſalvation by Jeſus Chriſt. If you think it worthy of a place in your Magazine, you may inſert it.

UPON reflection, I found every man would, naturally, form to himſelf a God like himſelf; and would love that God, until an enlightened underſtanding and awakened conſcience ſhould diſcover his error, as to the character of the true God.—I alſo perceived, that natural affections were often taken for thoſe which are gracious and ſpiritual; and that moral honeſty, civility, and deeds of humanity, were aſſumed as evidence of a pure heart and love unfeigned. But as theſe are all aſide from the point, and merely ſerve to ſhew, that *the heart is deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked*; ſo I found the only way to decide the point fairly, was to repair to the *ſure word of prophecy*, and therewith compare our hearts and lives.

In obedience to this rule, I took my Bible, and found the following declarations:—*God ſaw that the wickedneſs of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.—The whole head is ſick, and the whole heart faint: from the ſoal of the foot even unto the head, and there is no ſoundneſs in it; but wounds and bruiſes, and putrifying ſores.—There is none righteous, no, not one: there*

is none that understandeth, there is none that ſeeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.—The carnal mind is enmity againſt God. And concerning Jeſus Chriſt, as our Saviour, it is ſaid, *We hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was deſpiſed, and we eſteemed him not.—We will not have this man to reign over us.—O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, and ye would not.—Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*

Such are the plain declarations of the oracles of God; he that runneth may read and underſtand. The obvious ſenſe of theſe texts is, that man by nature has no moral goodneſs—his heart is corrupt, and wholly eſtranged from God and duty. He has an enmity of heart againſt God's character; he is not merely unfriendly, but harbours hatred—there is a poſitive force of the heart againſt him. Men, when divine reſtraints are taken off, are ſtout-hearted: they make their brow as braſs, and their neck as an iron ſinew. Nor are they better pleaſed with God's way of ſalvation, than with his character. They deſpiſe, reject, and hate a holy Saviour; and to ſuch a degree, that they will never come to him, except the Father draw them with the cords of divine love and irreſiſtible grace.

This character, which the Bible gives of the natural man, or carnal mind, is perfectly conſiſtent with what we know of the heart and practice of mankind. Let us come to experience and plain matter of fact; for I mean not to enter into a critical and metaphyſical diſquiſition of this ſubject. If we conſult the natural tempers and diſpoſitions of men, we ſhall find the want of holineſs; and direct oppoſition of heart and life to every thing good, ſo far as reſtraints are taken off.—Thus, we find our thoughts vain, idle, impure and wicked; not at all conformed to the holy law of God. Our words and actions are equally perverſe, and ſhew that the love of God is not in our hearts. How prone are we to words and acts of anger, wrath, hatred, envy, variance, ſtrife and deceit? How are our hearts and lives devoted to the honours, pleaſures and riches of this world, to the neglect of God and religion, and indeed to all righteous laws, human and divine? This is not the caſe of a few only, who are ſupereminent in wickedneſs, but it is the natural ſtate of every ſon and daughter of Adam. The firſt actings of infancy ſhew this bitter root; and as we grow

into a capacity of acting, we invariably, without one exception, produce the poiſonous fruits of diſobedience. The whole taſte and reliſh of the natural man, are oppoſed to the ways of holineſs: he ſees no beauty in, and feels no love to the divine character. Hence, men who can find no time to read their Bibles, to pray in their families, or attend on public worſhip, can find time enough to go into profane company, to bargain, ſpeculate and intrigue for riches and honours. Though praying, preaching, and godly converſation lull them to ſleep, they can ſpend days and nights in vain converſation, trifling amuſements, rioting and drunkenneſs. Thus, the fruit ſhews the nature of the tree: a man's life is a true index to his heart, whether under reſtraints or not. In the one caſe, he plays the hypocrite; in the other, he boldly acts out the heart. The natural man, at all times, and in every ſhape, is oppoſed to God's character, and to any way of ſalvation conſiſtent with that character.

This is an experimental truth. Thoſe who are transformed in the renewing of their minds, well know that it was *not of blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, but of God.* And would unregenerate man let conſcience ſpeak out, they would confeſs they felt no love to God, or his ways. By ſtupifying conſcience and ſtifling conviction, they may imagine they yield obedience in a mere moral walk; or, under the terrors of an awakened conſcience, they may think they feel the true fear of God; but it is a deception. The fear and obedience are wholly a forced work, without any love to God, to his law, to his Son, or to the method of ſalvation. Unregenerated men, whether awakened or unawakened, have no holy affection, no internal religion; and would have none externally, not even common honeſty, were it not for imperious circumſtances, ſuch as honour, reputation, gain, fear of man, and an alarmed conſcience.

Notwithſtanding the great boaſt of the goodneſs of human nature, none will truſt it—All are ready to arm againſt it.—Every bolt, lock and key is in point. "The exceſſive care taken in all writings and proceedings at law, to tie up the hands of parties, and prevent unfair advantages from being taken, ſhew how ſuſpicious men are of one another; and nobody but a fool will ſay their ſuſpicions are ill-grounded, or their caution needleſs. Horace, Juvenal, Perſius, Pope,

Young, &c. were keen and ſevere ſatiriſts; but, in my opinion, moſt legal writings teſtify the vices and villainy of the world with a much ſharper laſh than their writings. A deed of ſale, a marriage ſettlement, or a bill and anſwer, expoſe the diſhoneſty of the world with ſuch truth and ſerioufneſs, as infinitely exceed the moſt pointed wit. The vaſt length of ſuch writings, the preciſeneſs of every clauſe, the long ſtrings of ſynonimous words, &c. are, it ſeems, all little enough to defend juſtice againſt the many and artful attempts to be expected. There is, in ſhort, an univerſal corruption and depravity among mankind, ariſe it from whence it will." Such is the concurrent opinion and practice of mankind. It plainly ſays, *Every imagination of the thoughts of our hearts are only evil continually—none are righteous, none doth good, no, not one.*

It is alſo from this ſource of depravity in the heart, that we find ſo many neglect public worſhip, ſo many are unacquainted with their Bibles, and altogether inexperienced in prayer, either in private or in the family. Experience teaches, that prayer is greatly neglected, that many families omit the evening and morning ſacrifice, that they receive their daily bread, without aſking a bleſſing upon it, or returning thanks to the giver of their mercies! Under the light of the glorious goſpel, no reaſon can be given for ſuch things, but that the love of God is not in them—they will not come to Chriſt, that they may have life. *What more could have been done*, ſaith God, *to my vineyard, that I have not done to it?* Every thing fit and neceſſary for the ſalvation of mankind has been done; yet ſuch is the depravity of our nature, we will act unreaſonably towards God, we will not have him to reign, we will bear him wild grapes and nothing elſe.

This total depravity of affection will appear further evident, from the inefficacy of all moral ſuaſion. God, in his infinite wiſdom and mercy, hath given us a ſure word of prophecy, to lead us to a right knowledge of himſelf, of our ownſelves, and of the path of duty. In the goſpel, he is uſing a great variety of means to convince us of ſin, of righteouſneſs, and judgment, to diſcover to us the plague of our hearts, to teach us the need of a divine Saviour, and to excite us to flee from the wrath to come, to the ſtrong hold in Zion. But, alas! all the light in the world cannot affect the heart: men, under the goſpel, are not loſt for want of knowledge. Not-

withſtanding all the means of moral ſuaſion, men will periſh, unleſs divine, almighty power change the temper, taſte and reliſh of the heart. They may hear, read and pray, all their days; and yet the unholy will be unholy ſtill, and the filthy will be filthy ſtill.

In perfect agreement with this ſentiment, we daily obſerve mankind of all ages, ſtations and relations in life, living in the formal uſe of the means of ſalvation without any internal religion, without any conformity to God, and evidently going down the broad road to deſtruction. They draw nigh unto God with their mouths and honour him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him; and ſome in works deny him, being abominable and diſobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. In proſperity they forget God, and in adverſity they murmur againſt him, and revolt more and more.

Thus the inefficacy of the means of all moral ſuaſion, ſhews the total corruption of the natural heart. Whether God ſmiles or frowns, the carnal mind is ſtill the ſame: he follows his own way and rejects the way of peace.

"The Leproſy lies deep within.
No bleeding bird, nor bleeding beaſt,
Nor hyſſop branch, nor ſprinkling prieſt,
Nor running brook, nor flood, nor ſea,
Can waſh the diſmal ſtain away."

Enough, I preſume, has been ſaid to ſhew, that by nature mankind are wholly ſinful, and ſtrongly oppoſed to the true character of God, and his way of ſalvation by Jeſus Chriſt. I will now conclude with one or two reflections. And,

1. In our natural ſtate we are great enemies to ourſelves. There is none good but God, and no way of ſalvation but his way; therefore, in our enmity to him we are wedded to evil, and by rejecting his way of ſalvation, we court our own deſtruction, and foreclоſe our own happineſs. God is neceſſarily oppoſed to us, while we are at enmity with him, and unleſs we return unto him in love and obedience, he muſt and will puniſh us. The blame and the ſhame will be wholly ours. Our continuance in a ſtate of alienation from God, is the free and voluntary act of our hearts; there is no compulſi-

on. Are we willing to be delivered from our ſins, through the ſanctification of our nature? God and Chriſt are willing.—For this purpoſe the Father ſent Chriſt into the world to redeem it: for this purpoſe, he offers eternal life unto all that will come unto Chriſt. Through him he is reconciling the world unto himſelf; and aſſures us, that he is able to ſave to the uttermoſt, all that come unto God by him. There is now nothing to hinder our coming unto God and eternal happineſs, but the oppoſition of our carnal hearts. Yet, ſuch is this oppoſition, that unleſs God grants reſtraining grace, we ruſh upon the thick boſſes of his buckler, and court deſtruction without a covering.

2. Is the natural heart wholly corrupt as ſhewn above, then nothing ſhort of almighty power can change it from ſin to holineſs. Unholy affections can give no riſe to any holy reſolutions, nor influence us to the right uſe of the appointed means of meeting God. There is no power in the ſoul diſpoſed towards a holy change; but ſuch is the *enmity* of the carnal mind againſt God, that *he* muſt work in us, both to will and to do, or we ſhall never move towards him. Though we dread the puniſhment of ſin, we love the practice of it; and ſo ſtrong is our attachment to it, that no moral ſuaſion can break us off. Hence our Saviour ſaid, "Ye cannot come unto me, except the Father draw you." We *cannot* come to Chriſt, becauſe we *will not*. We hate his character and laws, and *cannot* embrace him againſt the affection of our hearts. This *enmity* is all the impoſſibility which lies in the way of thoſe who live under the Goſpel.

Thus a child, not diſpoſed to obey his parents, ſays he *cannot*. Our offended neighbour ſays he *cannot* be reconciled. No one will ſuppoſe there is any impediment in this caſe, but the want of a good diſpoſition. Juſt ſuch is our inability in the caſe before us. We *cannot* ſeek after God, againſt the taſte and inclination of our hearts. We have offended God; yet he has provided a way for our reconciliation, and invites all to come and be reconciled—we anſwer with a cold *cannot*. But why? Becauſe we do not love God, nor his Chriſt, nor his holy way of ſalvation; we have no other excuſe, no inability but our want of affection. And this diſaffection is ſo deep rooted in our hearts, that no moral ſuaſion can eradicate

it. God, by his almighty power, muſt trasform us in the renewing of our minds, or we ſhall die in our ſins.

3. Finally, impenitent ſinners under the goſpel will be the moſt inexcuſable of all men. God has made ample proviſion for the recovery of loſt men, and revealed it in the holy ſcriptures. We know his will, and his method of ſalvation by Jeſus Chriſt; and have no plea againſt it, but the diſaffection of our hearts. This plea will never paſs in the court of heaven. Not one will ariſe before the throne of the righteous Judge of all the earth, and plead that he did not love God, nor Chriſt, nor his way of ſalvation. In that ſolemn day, every mouth will be ſtopped, and impenitent ſinners will know, that ſufficient had been done for them, if they had been diſpoſed to accept of offered mercy. All blame will fall on the head of the ſinner.

Let impenitent ſinners, therefore, take warning in time, drop their weapons of rebellion, accept of an offered Saviour, and ſubmit to his government. Your *all* for eternity is now on trial; live then as you wiſh to account. Be careful to meet God, in his appointed means of ſalvation; he may, perhaps, leave a bleſſing behind him; for he has never ſaid, *ſeek ye me in vain.* Though moral ſuaſion will not change the heart, God may. His word and daily experience teach, that he ordinarily ſaves ſinners in the uſe of means. By theſe he awakens and convinces ſinners, and excites them to look out of themſelves unto Jeſus Chriſt for help. The work is his own, and he will carry it on in his own way and time, and not in ours.

Let theſe conſiderations encourage every ſinner diligently to uſe the appointed means of ſalvation. But if any are determined, at all events, to purſue the pleaſures of ſin, to caſt off fear, and reſtrain prayer before God, let them go on. But let them alſo know, that for all theſe things God will bring them into judgment.

ISRAEL.

[*From the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine.*]

A NARRATIVE

Of a Revival of Religion in Middlebury, a Parish of Waterbury, in the years 1799 *and* 1800; *communicated to the Editors by the Rev. Ira Hart, Pastor of the Church in said place.*

(Continued from page 382.)

LETTER II.

GENTLEMEN,

IN my last letter, I proposed to give you some account of particular exercises of individuals. I shall begin with the case of a young woman, a professor, who had been induced to attend a place of amusement, which she afterwards became convinced was improper. The circumstances will be mentioned mostly in her own words, as communicated to me in a letter.

"In compliance with your request, I give you my opinion and experience of the impropriety of a professor's attending balls. Permit me however, in the first place, to relate some particulars in an earlier part of my life. At the age of 13, I was admitted into company as an equal with those of 20 and 25. At 16, the Lord was pleased to stop my career of folly, and to call my mind from the world, by a deep sense of the importance of religion to the present and future happiness of my soul. After a painful conviction of the awful depravity of my heart, the amazing distance I was at from God by nature, my desert of everlasting punishment, and the total inability of helping myself by any works of righteousness which I could do; I was brought, as I believed, to throw down my weapons and submit to God. The beauty, excellency and propriety of his character and government, produced a calm serenity of mind, to which I was before a stranger. The conversation and society of the serious gave me more satisfaction in one hour, than all the vain amusements which I could call to mind from my cradle until that moment. I met with many trials from the gay company with which I had always lived in harmony; but for the most part was enabled to encounter them with less difficulty than I expected. Returning from school, I met with a gentleman who had been absent during my serious im-

preſſions. He accoſted me in the following manner: "How do you do Miſs ——? I hear you are ſerious and have done dancing—Is it ſo?" I replied, that I had indeed refuſed to attend balls, for I believed that I had already ſpent too much time in that folly; but feared I was not ſo ſerious as had been repreſented. "Well," returned the gentleman, "you have got a fit, but I am not much concerned, it will ſoon be over. I never knew an inſtance fail, but in a ſhort time thoſe ſerious perſons would be as gay as ever. I ſhall ſoon ſee you at ſuch and ſuch a ball room; and you will dance as ſprightly as ever. I ſhall then remind you of what I now ſay; but you will tell me, I don't feel now as I did then." He left me, for I was unable to anſwer. As ſoon as his face was turned, the tears flowed without controul. I exclaimed to myſelf, *Oh is it poſſible! Is it poſſible!* Can it be that I ſhall be left to that miſerable reſort for happineſs! I tried to believe that he propheſied falſely; but ſtill I knew that it was not impoſſible. For ſome time I was much diſtreſſed, leſt I ſhould be left to diſhonour the cauſe of religion, and bring contempt upon its profeſſors. About the age of nineteen, this over anxious concern, as I then thought it, left my mind, by degrees, and I loſt much of the ſenſe of my dependence. I heard too much of the applauſe of my fellow worms, which gave a ſpring to pride and ſelf conceit, till alas! they gained an unhappy aſcendency. I was now frequently in company with thoſe who were indeed *civil*, but not *ſerious*, and joined in their trifling amuſement. Their attention and politeneſs concealed the danger, and led me to be more and more converſant with ſuch ſcenes of folly. At the time of your ordination, when I was about 20, I was ſolicited by a near relation, out of politeneſs to ſome reſpectable acquaintance then preſent, to attend a ball. I knew he would not adviſe me to do any thing which *he judged* at all inconſiſtent with my profeſſion. After conſiderable converſation, and with much reluctance, I conſented to go; and I aſſure you, ſir, there was not a perſon in the company, but what ſaw me. After the intereſting ſervices of the day, and the ſolemn conſecration of a miniſter to feed my ſoul with the bread of life and the waters of life, here I was in the ball room, amid the thoughtleſs and the gay. Nor was this the laſt time. I was again where there was muſic

and dancing. My chriſtian friends were alarmed, and reproved me, but with little effect. I had liſtened to the voice of adulation, and God had left me to reap the reward of my folly. I had almoſt loſt ſight of God, and was ſwiftly gliding down the ſtream of ſpiritual declenſion. But in mercy God was pleaſed to ſtop me, open my eyes, and bring me to conſideration. Oh! the diſtreſs, anxiety, fears and doubts which now harrowed up my ſoul!* Darkneſs without and darkneſs within! I ſincerely thought that if I could have recalled the laſt twelve months, and have removed into ſome diſtant land, where I ſhould never behold a face which I ever ſaw before, I ſhould have choſen it, rather than to have brought the diſgrace which I then felt I had brought upon the cauſe of Chriſt.—My diſtreſs was unknown to any but myſelf, and nothing ſhort of experience can conceive it. All my former feelings, with the gentleman's prediction, were brought freſh to mind, and every reflection tended to aggravate my crime and enhance my diſtreſs. A compaſſionate Saviour at length brought me to feel and ſay,

"His ſtrokes were fewer than my crimes,
And lighter than my guilt."

"I think, ſir, I can ſay from experience, that the amuſements of the thoughtleſs are exceedingly detrimental to the Chriſtian's growth in grace, and calculated to keep the ſoul in leanneſs, and to render a perſon unhappy in a religious profeſſion and diſcontented with the world. Conſcience is continually ſmiting and reproving; and as the Chriſtian has more light than an Infidel, he is of courſe more unhappy in the neglect of his duty. To undertake to ſerve God and Mammon, is a ſure way to render life miſerable; for both ſcripture and experience tell us we cannot do it. If you judge what I have written will be of uſe as a warning to my young brethren and ſiſters in Chriſt, you may diſpoſe of it for that purpoſe."

Several profeſſing Chriſtians were ſhaken and greatly diſtreſſed, leſt they had truſted in the hope of the hypocrite.—The awakening was of great ſervice to them, and indeed to the whole church. We had ſweet ſeaſons of communion, at the Lord's table, and ſeemed in ſome degree to realize, that

* This was at the beginning of the late revival.

Jeſus was preſent in his church, to comfort and refreſh his people. The diſtreſs and doubts entertained at this time by ſome, were wiſely ordered in Providence to their own future comfort and growth in grace, and to quicken others in the way to Heaven.

The following caſes will exhibit a general view of the exerciſes of thoſe who have been ſubjects of the work. I give the account nearly in their own words, that they may appear to ſpeak for themſelves, and teſtify what God has done for their ſouls. A man aged 55 gave me the following account.

"I had little or no religious inſtruction until about the age of twenty-one; and except a few ſeaſons of conviction, which were ſoon gone, my youth, and indeed my life has been ſpent in ſtupidity. I was perſuaded that I muſt and could do ſomething of myſelf, but continually put it off to a more convenient ſeaſon, and lived without hope and without God in the world. I was much oppoſed to the Calviniſtic doctrines of grace, and wanted to aſk miniſters and others whether they were really Chriſtians according to their ſcheme of juſtification by faith alone. I offered my children in baptiſm, becauſe it was faſhionable, and ſuppoſed I had ſo far done my duty. After ſome thought upon the doctrines of religion, I concluded that if election was true, I was not to blame. Here I ſettled down at eaſe, and was in this ſituation when the religious attention began. I had a curioſity to hear and ſee, but felt no uncommon concern until I heard a ſermon from theſe words, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt."* The word was ſet home with power, and my ſins appeared as a thick cloud. I determined to ſubmit myſelf to God; I thought I did; yet I felt unaccountably diſtreſſed. I thought I had done enough, but found no relief from my agony of mind. My ſinfulneſs appeared greater than I could before have believed; it lay upon me as an intolerable burden, until the anguiſh of my mind impelled me to cry out for mercy. One day, being alone in the fields, I could not contain my diſtreſs, but for ſome time on my knees cried aloud, "*Lord have mercy on me! Lord have mercy on me!*" I had hitherto neglected family prayer, but now I reſolved to begin the next Sabbath morning. The time came, but I could not pray. My diſtreſs was ſoon increaſed, by re-

* Mat. ii. 28.

flection on this text, "No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven."* The word came with power, and I ſaid, "Wo is me, if I don't pray in my family." In the evening I attempted. I had many trials, ſome of them perhaps uncommon, and not profitable to relate. Still I was determined to be ſaved by the law. My heart roſe againſt goſpel doctrines, eſpecially election, which I hated. Yet I could find no reſt in the law. That I had broken the law was manifeſt, and this ſcripture was directly againſt me—"Curſed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."† I could ſcarcely eat, drink or ſleep; concluded there was no mercy for me, and approached the gates of deſpair. All this time I was ſeeking ſalvation by the works of the law. One morning I felt better, and enjoyed a ſerenity of mind for which I could not account. I was ſoon engaged in contemplation on this ſcripture, "For whoſoever will ſave his life ſhall loſe it; and whoſoever will loſe his life for my ſake ſhall find it."‡ My mind immediately explained it thus: "Whoſoever will ſave his life by reſting on his own works of the law, ſhall loſe it; but whoſoever will renounce all dependence upon himſelf, and truſt alone to grace in Chriſt, ſhall find it." In a moment, the fabric I had ſo long and ſo obſtinately endeavoured to rear, tumbled in pieces. I wondered at the ignorance and folly of all my former attempts, and that I ſhould miſtake eſſentially in ſo plain a caſe. The difficulty was ſoon removed by this text—"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are fooliſhneſs unto him, neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned."‖ My mind dwelt upon theſe and other paſſages as upon a treaſure newly found. I ſeemed really to come from darkneſs to light. The words I had often read, but there now appeared an heavenly beauty I had never known before. I felt a deſire to glorify God, who had contrived ſuch an excellent ſcheme of ſalvation, and revealed it ſo plainly to men. I found the Bible had been a ſealed book to me, and that with all my gettings I had never got a true underſtanding of the way of ſalvation by Jeſus Chriſt. The whole ſcheme of goſpel doctrines, eſpecially election and divine ſovereignty, which before made my heart riſe up in enmity

* Luke ix. 62. † Galatians iii. 10. ‡ Matt. xvi. 25. ‖ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

againſt God, now appeared glorious and lovely doctrines. I ſaw that all I had done to obtain ſalvation was wholly ſelfiſh; that I was totally depraved, and that unleſs election was true there could be no hope in my caſe. I perceived that all my oppoſition to the doctrines of grace originated in pride, becauſe I was not willing that God ſhould work in me to will and to do of his own good pleaſure. I now rejoiced that he did do it, and yet found myſelf in the unimpaired poſſeſſion of moral freedom. I thought before that I was right and God was wrong, but now I felt that God was right and I was wrong; and that my former ſcheme of ſalvation, by works of the law, if it could be true was not deſirable, becauſe unſpeakably leſs beautiful, than that by ſovereign grace in Jeſus Chriſt. I felt no deſire to hear preaching about works, unleſs a clear diſtinction was made between duty and merit. I thought little of myſelf or of the danger of future puniſhment; God was all glorious, and the Saviour the chiefeſt among ten thouſand for his own ſake. Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this time, a brand plucked from the fire; in myſelf, a poor, miſerable, guilty creature; and if I am ever ſaved, it will manifeſtly be all of God. Not unto me but unto God through Chriſt be all the glory forever."

A young woman addreſſed me by letter as follows. "My deſign, in this communication, is to inform you what the Lord hath done for my ſoul. At the time of my firſt ſerious impreſſions, I was ſixteen years old, and had to that time lived a careleſs and ſtupid life; a ſtranger to God and Chriſt, and to things ſacred and divine. I thought I was not very bad, as I refrained from ſtealing, lying, ſwearing and other open violations of God's holy law; not conſidering that he looks at the heart. I thought I was too young to attend much to religion, and I conſidered it a ſad and melancholy thing, fit for none but thoſe who were juſt about to leave this world. I depended much on the doctrine of election, as I had perverted it. "If I am to be ſaved I ſhall be ſaved, let me do what I will; and if I am to be loſt, I ſhall be loſt let me do what I will." Here I reſted, ſecure in my ſinful neglect of God and his Son Jeſus Chriſt. And I fear that many who are older and wiſer than I, reſt on the ſame ſandy foundation. I had a great taſte for reading, but I read thoſe books only which ſerved to poiſon my mind, and lead it from God and ſerious

things. When the awakening appeared among us, and one and another of my companions were inquiring what they ſhould do to be ſaved, I reſolved to go on as I was, let the conſequences be what they would. I lived from home, and hearing that my aged parents and two of my ſiſters were under great concern of mind, I could not forbear ſighing and ſaying to myſelf, "Are they all fools? I ſhall never enjoy another moment's comfort with them as long as I live." It appeared to me that I would not feel as they did for the whole world. The firſt ſerious impreſſion on my mind was while reading theſe lines in the "Young Child's pious Reſolutions."

"'Tis time to ſeek to God, and pray
For what I want for every day;
I have a precious ſoul to ſave,
And I a mortal body have."

"I had hitherto thought that there would be time enough for me to attend to religion when I was *old*; but theſe words came with ſuch power that I could not reſt without ſeeking an intereſt in Chriſt *immediately*. I was greatly concerned about myſelf, and felt that I muſt do ſomething, but what to do I knew not. I could not pray, and never had prayed in my whole life. I durſt not repeat the Lord's prayer, becauſe I thought it was made for his diſciples and not for me. I reſolved that no one ſhould know my feelings; but ſoon my diſtreſs poured in upon me as a flood, and I could not forbear crying to the Saviour for mercy. I attended meeting the next Sabbath, expecting to find relief, when theſe awful words were the ſubject of diſcourſe: "It ſhall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee."*— My ſins roſe in order before me. I was ſtruck dumb before God while theſe words ſounded in my ears, and the ſermon deſcribed my awful caſe. Inſtead of finding comfort, I went home with a heavy heart. I ſoon began to doubt whether the Bible was the word of God. I thought it might poſſibly be a forgery, and earneſtly hoped it was. I hated the Bible becauſe it contained my condemnation.† I felt that God was

* Matt. xi. 21.

† This ſentence gives the true reaſon why the ſcriptures are rejected by infidels.

partial in ſhewing mercy to others and not to me. The enmity of my heart roſe againſt him; and indeed I wiſhed there was no God. I attempted to caſt the blame on him and juſtify myſelf, but ſtill could not be ſatisfied. I longed to be ſpoken out of exiſtence, for the more I underſtood of the divine character, the more I hated it, and could not endure the thought that the Lord reigned and that all things were at his abſolute diſpoſal. When I heard of ſome who obtained comfort and had not been ſo long in diſtreſs as I had, my heart boiled within me. I thought I could not live long in this diſtreſs, and that God would not ſuffer ſuch a wicked wretch to live; and even death appeared deſirable though it ſhould make me eternally miſerable, becauſe while living I thought I was preparing for a more aggravated puniſhment. While walking I ſometimes imagined the earth would open and ſwallow me up; and that I hung over the bottomleſs pit by nothing but the brittle thread of life. I ſlept but little, for if I went to ſleep I was afraid I ſhould awake in hell.

"In this unhappy ſtate of mind, I continued from Sept. '99 till March 1800, when I was taken dangerouſly ſick, and for ſome days deprived of reaſon. When my reaſon returned, I ſuppoſed I muſt ſoon die; but *how* different were my feelings now from what they had formerly been! God appeared to me perfectly juſt and righteous in all his dealings with me. It appeared to be right and reaſonable that I ſhould love ſuch a holy being. I felt more compoſed and tranquil than ever before, and I could ſay with the man reſtored to ſight, "Whereas I was blind, now I ſee." * I ſaw ſuch a beauty and lovelineſs in God and the things I before hated, that I ſeemed to be in a new world, where every thing ſpoke the glory of God. He appeared to me ſo holy, righteous and good in all his works and diſpenſations, that I could freely ſubmit myſelf to him and ſay with Job, "Though he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him." † When I recovered ſo as to wait on God in his houſe, I enjoyed more delight in one day than in all the balls and vain amuſements I had attended in my life. God and his ſervice have ever ſince appeared glorious to me, and oh that I may glorify him in life, death and eternity! My hope depends ſolely on the rich, free and ſovereign grace of God in Jeſus Chriſt."

* 1 John ix. 25. † Job xiii. 15.

A young married woman gives the following account:

"Near the close of September, 1799, while I enjoyed a comfortable state of health, a religious meeting was attended at our house. I found myself somewhat impressed with a sense of sin, and thought I wished to be a Christian. A day or two after this meeting, my health rapidly declined; I was soon dangerously ill, and to appearance on the borders of the grave. My great concern was to recover my health, and my hope rested in the physician, and not in Christ. My situation grew more and more alarming, and my friends viewed me as near the end of life. I was in some measure alarmed, and much feared that if I should die, I should be eternally miserable. I endeavoured to satisfy myself by reflecting, that I was not so guilty as others. Except when people were talking to me of faith, repentance and the new-birth, I always doubted whether the justice of an holy God would send me to hell for the few crimes I had committed. Alas! how little did I know of the evil nature of sin, and of my own criminality before God! And all this when I was viewed by others on the borders of eternity! Indeed, sir, your conversation, at the time of your visits, and the conversation of other religious people, was never sufficient to drive me wholly from this refuge. Neither your prayers, nor the apparent near approach of death, ever excited in my mind any degree of anxious concern for my soul. The idea of leaving my husband and children appeared the most distressing; but I chose not to hear the subject mentioned, and endeavoured to keep it from my mind as much as possible. A beneficent God at length interposed in my behalf, rebuked my painful disorder, and restored me to my family as one ransomed from the grave. But I was as stupid under the mercies of God, as I had been before under his chastising hand. Nothing could make my heart submit. I was stupid when brought to the brink of the grave, with an eternity of woe before me; and I was stupid when marvelously restored to health. The world with all its delusive charms, now presented itself to my view. As soon as I was able to ride out, I visited an elder brother, who conversed with me freely on my situation, and the mercies I had received. I observed to him, that I really wished to become religious, but I was certain it was not in my power. He replied, that it was impossible for him to tell for what purpose my life had

been ſo remarkably ſpared; but that from my apparent ſtupidity, there was great reaſon to fear it was that I might have an opportunity of filling up the meaſure of my iniquities.—The idea ſtruck me, and ſeemed the voice of warning from God to me, to anſwer for my ingratitude. The ſins of my paſt life roſe, and were ſet in order before me. I ſoon found I had abuſed all the mercies of God; that there was a holy law which I had tranſgreſſed, and that I was under its juſt, though awful curſe. I reſted but little the following night, and my diſtreſs continued for ſeveral days. I was again about to go back; but the following Sabbath I attended meeting, when a thank-offering was preſented for my recovery. Here my conviction and diſtreſs revived, and continued through the week. The next Sabbath I heard a ſermon from theſe words, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone."* The ſermon was applicable, as I thought, to my caſe, and ſeemed to be addreſſed to me in particular. My convictions increaſed until I found myſelf hanging over the pit of everlaſting woe, deſtitute of the leaſt merit, and wounded by reflection upon a whole life ſpent in rebellion againſt God. Although I was convinced that I had been hitherto kept in exiſtence by the forbearance of God, yet now it appeared to me, that I ſo richly deſerved his wrath and curſe, that I had nothing elſe to expect. With theſe views I again attended meeting, and found the ſame broken law flaming againſt me, and bringing my iniquity before my face. I returned home, took my Bible and retired, and while peruſing the ſacred pages, this thought aroſe in my mind—"Jeſus has died for ſinners." It filled my heart with joy, and although in my agony of mind I had not very clear views of Chriſt as Mediator, yet the idea was now ſweet and refreſhing to my weary and heavy-laden ſoul. After a few weeks, I found myſelf, as I believed, willing to come to the feet of Jeſus and lie low in the duſt before him. My comfort was all built on Chriſt as the foundation, and I think he then appeared, and ſtill appears lovely as he is in himſelf, and will be ſo forever, whatever becomes of me a ſinner.—During my convictions I had many heart-riſings againſt God and the doctrines of grace; but when this enmity was ſlain by the Holy Spirit, in a way which I know not, God appeared juſt and righteous; Chriſt the chiefeſt among ten thouſand

* Hoſea iv. 17.

and altogether lovely; and the doctrines of grace the ſweet food of my ſoul, the manna from heaven. Indeed, ſir, I have been ſuch an ungrateful, blind and ſtupid ſinner, that I am ſure there can be no hope in my caſe, unleſs there is a "remnant according to the election of grace."* My attainments are ſo far ſhort of what I ſhould ſuppoſe would be in a real Chriſtian, that I am, eſpecially at times, doubtful whether I ſhall ever obtain a ſeat at the right hand of Chriſt: but if this ſhould ever be, I ſhall be leſs than the leaſt of all ſaints, and muſt forever diſclaim all merit in myſelf, lay my crown at the feet of Immanuel, and aſcribe all to his meritorious righteouſneſs. Let the praiſe and the glory be forever to his electing love, to rich, free and ſovereign grace."

Theſe caſes are not ſelected becauſe more ſtriking than others, but as moſt eaſily and conciſely deſcribed, and obtained with leſs difficulty than others, perhaps in many reſpects more intereſting, might have been.

Earneſtly deſiring that the religion of Jeſus Chriſt may ſpread through the whole earth, I remain your moſt obedient humble ſervant, IRA HART.

Middlebury, July 15, 1802.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER

From the Rev. L. Floyd, Miſſionary, employed by the Congregational Society of the ſtate of South-Carolina, for promoting the intereſts of religion, to the Chairman of the Board of Directors of ſaid Society—Publiſhed by order of the Board.

"IN Auguſt I took the liberty of leaving, for a few weeks, the diſtrict aſſigned me, in order to attend ſome large ſacramental meetings in the upper part of the ſtate. I had the pleaſure of attending three of theſe meetings, where the multitudes collected in the open woods, and the extraordinary exerciſes which I ſaw and heard, opened to me a ſcene entirely new, and in the higheſt degree intereſting. Every thing which I could ſay in deſcribing this truly wonderful work of God, has no doubt been anticipated by thoſe who have previouſly correſponded with you on the ſubject; but

* Rom. xi. 5.

you will permit me to indulge myſelf in a few obſervations on what I ſaw and heard.

"The deſigns and ways of God are indeed unſearchable. The important purpoſes of his wiſdom and grace are often effected, not in the way which human wiſdom would dictate, but according to the incomprehenſible counſel of his ſovereign will. The bodily exerciſes which take place in the preſent revival, may preſent a ſtumbling block to the wiſdom of man; but if God, by this, accelerates the progreſs of his work, we ought to be not only ſatisfied but thankful.

"The work is indeed extraordinary, and ſeveral appendages of it may be very far from congenial to the prevailing ſentiments of the polite world. I think it proper, however, to obſerve, that I have found fewer diſagreeable circumſtances than I had previouſly contemplated. The miniſters uſed their utmoſt endeavours to preſerve order among the people, and inſtead of terrific declamation, their chief aim appeared to be to declare the important truths of the goſpel with plainneſs, ſimplicity and rational energy. And it was very obſervable, that while the conciliating voice of the goſpel was calmly proclaimed, the work appeared greater than at any other time. Thoſe who could ſit unmoved while the terrors of a broken law were ſounded in their ears, felt their ſtony hearts melt into penitential ſorrow, under the force of this intereſting truth, that "God was in Chriſt, reconciling the world unto himſelf." The goſpel was indeed preached with an animated pathos, which evidently declared the pious zeal of the clergy; but this muſt be admitted to be very correſpondent to the ſpirit of the apoſtolical Miſſionaries, who, conſtrained by the love of Chriſt, beſought ſinners to be reconciled to God.

"Another circumſtance, in which I was agreeably diſappointed, was the manner of the exerciſe of thoſe who became affected. I had expected to hear loud outcries from the ſubjects of the work, which where they are ſo numerous, would be a great diſadvantage to regular preaching. But where I attended, the diſcourſes of the preachers were ſeldom diſturbed by any noiſe. Sometimes, indeed, thoſe affected ſeem conſtrained to cry out, but much more frequently, eſpecially in time of public preaching, they lie in deep exerciſe of mind, while their voice is ſcarcely heard by thoſe around them. Sometimes in time of preaching, there would appear to be but

few in exercise; yet, when the people were dismissed and began to disperse, we could discover them lying in every part of of the congregation.

The people are most apt to run into confusion in different exercises of devotion, in the intervals of public worship. They sometimes collect in groups around those who are stricken down; while some of them engage in singing or some other exercise, and sometimes different exercises may be heard at once so near together, as to have the appearance of disorder. But these things the Presbyterian ministers endeavour to restrain, as far as the nature of the case will admit. Upon the whole, I think the disorders are as few as can be expected in such vast assemblies of people; of different religious persuasions, of different sentiments and different habits and manners. And, undoubtedly, the great good that is done abundantly more than compensates for every thing disagreeable, that may arise from the weakness of human nature.

"A number I saw under exercises, in which their countenances expressed the most serene and extatic pleasure, while their bodies appeared entirely helpless, and the words they articulated were uttered in very feeble accents. A smile, the most placid that can be imagined, overspread the whole visage, while their addresses to Heaven and to those around them, declared the evangelical sentiments of their heart. The views which occupied their minds must have been supremely delightful; and their situations, though it may be deprecated by the gay and dissipated, rather enviable, than either pitiable or contemptible in the eye of the pious spectator.

"The present revival, is doubtless a good work; but when we consider the weakness of human nature, and the many artifices of the great adversary of souls, we must, I humbly think, be convinced of the necessity of much wisdom and prudence, as well as zeal in the ministry, in order to guard against these irregular sallies of passion, which, if indulged without restraint, not only bring a reproach on religion, but hinder the most profitable exercises of genuine piety. But it is not for me to prescribe in this matter. God, we may hope, will not only support his own cause, but exercise such a special care over his children as will preserve them, though weak, from pernicious delusions. But it is the duty of Christians, and especially of Christian ministers, to conduct themselves with circumspection."